

Teens held in robbery of pair's poker winnings

By Jerome Burdi and Leon Fooksman
South Florida Sun-Sentinel

FLORIDA — Robbers were watching when two Wellington college students struck it big at a poker tournament, authorities said.

At least three teenagers followed Brett Maistri and Sean Remz from Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino some 50 miles north to their hometown. The robbers used their vehicle to cut the victims off in traffic, pointed guns at them and took their more than \$24,000 in winnings.

On Tuesday, more than two months after the March attack, detectives charged three 18-year-olds — Emmanuel Alexis, of North Miami Beach, Jahson Linton, of Boynton Beach, and Clinton Ellington Jr., of Miami — with armed robbery and aggravated battery with a firearm.

“It was a horrible experience,” said Maistri’s mother, Loren Lodner. “They’re relieved. They’re happy that the police were able to [make arrests] so fast and efficiently.”

Maistri and Remz are the latest targets of robbers going after gambling jackpots.

In November, two men forced their way into the home of a Hollywood couple returning from the Hard Rock and robbed them, police said. A month earlier, four people were robbed in three separate incidents at the Isle of Capri Casino in Pompano Beach. In 2003, a mother of nine was shot and injured after winning \$5,900 in a West Palm Beach bingo hall.

Similar attacks have occurred in New Orleans, Milwaukee, Tulsa, Okla., and Las Vegas.

Las Vegas police spokesman Officer Ramon Denby said casino winners there are either escorted home, leave their winnings to pick up at a later time, or get paid by check. It is important to cooperate during a robbery and give up the check or cash, he said.

“After winning, try to keep a low profile,” Denby said. “Never have that cold cash with you. That just attracts the wrong kind of people.”

At first, Palm Beach sheriff’s detectives questioned whether Maistri and Remz were telling the truth about their March 29 attack, investigators said. But once they got surveillance footage and reconstructed the events, they came to believe the victims and three suspects were identified.

Agents from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and deputies from the Sheriff’s Office searched the suspects’ homes on Tuesday and made the arrests.

Investigators believe the robbers watched Maistri and Remz while they played in the tournament. After the two cashed out, casino security personnel escorted them to their cars. Detectives said the suspects followed the winners north to Wellington.

At the intersection of Wellington Trace and Forest Hill Boulevard, Maistri and Remz told authorities that two men in ski masks cut them off and pointed handguns at them. At least one shot was fired. The victims managed to drive off to Maistri’s home but the robbers followed them.

Maistri hid in the bushes but the robbers caught up with Remz, and took more than \$3,000. They stole the rest of the winnings, more than \$19,000, from one of the cars.

Gary Bitner, spokesman for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, said winners have the option to take their winnings in check form but security does not escort winners off tribal land.

“With regard to security at the Hard Rock, this is not a place where people get away with things,” he said. “There are nearly 700 cameras everywhere.”

Bitner declined to comment on details of the robbery.

Lodner said both teens enjoy playing poker and had never previously won as much money as they did the night of the robbery. Lodner said her son, a freshman, was so disturbed by the incident that he was unable to finish his semester at college.

Warrant issued for Mashantucket chairman

By Erica Jacobson
Norwich Bulletin

NORWICH, Conn. — A family court in New York issued an arrest warrant Monday for Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Chairman Michael Thomas for failing to return his 4-year-old daughter just days after the girl’s mother, Vanessa Hyman, had a similar request refused by a Norwich Superior Court judge.

David Bookstaver, a spokesman for the New York state court system, said a judge in Westchester County issued a bench warrant Monday after Hyman, who lives in New Rochelle, N.Y., requested it.

In the papers filed May 28 in Norwich, Hyman submitted five handwritten pages detailing her concern about where her daughter was, who was caring for her and her inability

to reach the girl.

“I haven’t been able to speak to her in days,” Hyman wrote. “I had no idea where she was. When I finally did speak to her, her voice sounded shaky and she repeatedly asked for her sister.”

Linda Mariani, a New London lawyer representing Thomas, said in a statement Tuesday that Hyman misrepresented a situation settled Feb. 7 when the Mashantucket

Tribal Court granted Thomas physical custody of his daughter.

When Hyman applied for the order in New York, Mariani wrote, she said the girl was not American Indian and therefore not eligible for the Indian Child Welfare Act. Hyman also said that the girl’s custody was not at issue in any other court, despite the orders handed down in tribal court, Mariani wrote.



Associated Press

Vanessa Hyman talks with State Police and Ledyard Police Tuesday, in Ledyard, Conn., as the police look into the custody of Hyman's 4-year-old daughter after a New York judge issued an arrest warrant for the chairman of the Indian tribe that runs Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut as part of the child custody case. Mahantucket Pequot Tribal Chairman Michael Thomas has kept his daughter on reservation property since May. The child was supposed to be returned on May 18.

Cherry Creek residents return home after flood

By Andrea J. Cook
Rapid City Journal

CHERRY CREEK, S.D. — People living in the small village of Cherry Creek on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation are back home and cleaning up water damage after being forced from their homes last week, a tribal official said Tuesday.

But, another heavy rain could force them from their homes again.

Gov. Mike Rounds toured parts of the reservation Mon-

day and met with tribal leaders to see what the state can do to help with clean-up efforts.

The American Red Cross opened emergency shelters at Takini and Eagle Butte last Friday and Saturday to house people driven from storm-battered homes as floodwaters rose.

No homes were lost in Cherry Creek, although many mobile homes were damaged by rain, wind and hail, according to Harold Condon, tribal administrative

officer. Several basements also flooded, he said.

“There was not adequate drainage in the community,” Condon said.

Cherry Creek residents were bused to Takini and Eagle Butte, according to Russ Korzeniewski, director of plans and programs for the American Red Cross in Rapid City.

Korzeniewski said 80 people stayed at the Takini shelter on Friday night, and 22 on Saturday.

Eleven people were

housed at Eagle Butte on Friday, but no one used the shelter Saturday night.

“The majority were from the Cherry Creek area,” Korzeniewski said.

Tribal Chairman Joseph Brings Plenty and his staff did a “fantastic job” evacuating people from areas threatened by flood waters, he said.

The Red Cross has prepared more than 100 cleaning kits for distribution on the reservation and in other areas damaged by floodwaters. The kits include a buck-

et, bleach, a heavy-duty cleaner, gloves, sponges, garbage bags, mops and brooms.

A variety of Rapid City businesses and organizations contributed items for the cleanup kits, Korzeniewski said.

Mold could become a serious health issue in water damaged homes, Condon said.

Officials are busy assessing damages to homes to determine the extent of the damage.

Negotiations could clear way for Mashpee casino

Joe Short sleeve
WBZ

BOSTON — Massachusetts is prepared to negotiate a casino compact with the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe that would clear the way for a massive full scale casino in Middleboro.

“We are prepared to negotiate within the parameters we have under existing law,” said Massachusetts Governor Patrick on Monday.

Even though his proposal for three casinos died in the legislature, it’s a good bet casino gambling is coming to the Bay State.

WBZ has learned the state

is poised to start negotiating a separate contract, or compact, which would make an Indian casino in Middleboro a reality.

Negotiations would start once the state was formally notified by the tribe, and that notification is expected soon.

It’s the same legal framework which allowed the Foxwoods Casino to be built in Connecticut. To date, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe has handed over more than \$2 billion to that state since the doors opened in 1993.

And put simply, that’s the bottom line. Massachusetts wants a piece of the Middle-

boro casino pie.

The Mashpee tribe, which is federally recognized, has certain legal rights as an independent nation. Nonetheless, they would like the state’s approval.

The state in return for those approvals would like a percentage.

Connecticut gets 25 percent of the slot machine cash or more than \$10 million each month. You can expect Massachusetts to ask for that amount or more.

“Some form of expanded gaming is coming because the tribe has some tribal rights and we want to be ahead of that,” said

Patrick.

But the clock is ticking and WBZ has learned negotiations between the state and the chairman of the tribe, Shawn Hendricks, are expected to start this month.

Construction plans for their massive Middleboro resort casino are well under way.

Chairman Hendricks released a statement to WBZ: “The tribe continues to make great progress through the federal process...part of that process will be to ask the commonwealth to negotiate a compact at the appropriate time.”

Race and ethnicity still top motivator for hate crimes

Canadian Broadcasting Centre

CANADA — Race and ethnicity still top the list of Canada’s most common motivators of hate crimes, according to a Statistics Canada report released Monday that shows blacks as the main target.

The report was limited to data obtained from police cases from forces covering 87 per cent of Canada’s population and additional information from victimization surveys.

Of the 892 hate crimes reported by police forces

across the country in 2006, six in 10 were linked to race or ethnicity, the report says.

Nearly half of the 502 race-linked hate crimes targeted blacks, compared with 13 per cent, or 66 incidents, aimed at South Asians and 12 per cent, or 61 incidents, at Arabs and West Asians. Twenty-five police-recorded hate crimes targeted Caucasians and 24 were directed at Aboriginal people, with the remainder accounted for by categories titled multiple races and others.

More than half of the total hate crimes in 2006 were

property offences such as mischief, but about one-third involved violence, including assaults, one homicide and two attempted murders.

While race remained the highest motivator, religion appeared to account for one-quarter of the police-reported hate crimes. Jewish-faith targets accounted for almost two-thirds of the incidents followed by Islamic targets at 21 per cent and Catholics with six per cent.

Some members of the Muslim community are questioning the numbers.

Mohamed Elmasry, nation-

al president of Canadian Islamic Congress, suggested the report doesn’t reflect reality, saying a lack of resources led to the community neglecting to report every single hate crime.

“The Muslim community was under great stress since 9/11,” he said, adding that it exhausted its resources trying to report all the crimes.

The report notes that Canada’s religious composition changed in the years leading up to 2006, with the largest increases between 1991 and 2001 in the Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist denominations.

Autopsy results: ‘Inconclusive’

By Chris Merrill
Casper Star-Tribune

LANDER, Wyo. — A Fremont County official said today that preliminary results from autopsies of three teenage girls were “inconclusive,” and investigators are still uncertain about what caused the recent tragedy near here.

Alexis Gardner, Alex Whiteplume and Winter Rose Thomas, all between the ages of 13 and 15, were found dead in a rental home last week in the Beaver Creek housing development on the Wind River Indian Reservation, just south of Riverton.

Friends, relatives and community members had been awaiting the preliminary results of the investigation with the hopes of learning what killed the three girls, but the initial post-mortem examinations turned up nothing “obvious,” said Fremont County Coroner Ed McAuslan.

The autopsies were performed at McKee Medical Center in Loveland, Colo.

“At this time it’s an open investigation, and we have made no determinations because the preliminary findings are inconclusive,” McAuslan said. “At this point, nothing can be ruled out.”